Next Meetings will be Oct 14 & 28.

Tuesday 10/14/87: 8-Bit SIG (at PG&E).
Tuesday 10/28/87: ST SIG (at Paradise).

The 8-bit meeting is the general meeting and is held at the PG&E meeting center, corner of Marsh and Higuera in SLO. The ST-SIG is held at the Paradise Computer Store on Capitollo Way, off Broad, near San Luis Paints and Williams Brothers.

All meetings begin at 7:00 pm. Call one of the officers listed on page 2 if you need more information or directions to the meeting. Members are encouraged to make a presentation, demonstrate a program, or show a unique application. Contact the president or vice president first.

Our meetings are great opportunities to share and learn.
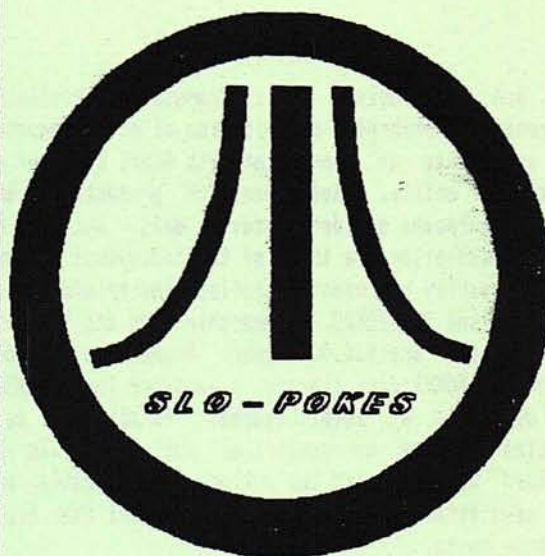
SLO - POKES

*The Journal of
the
San Luis Obispo
Atari Computer
Enthusuasts*

IN THIS ISSUE:

**SLO—POKES
PO BOX 4156
SAN LUIS OBISPO,
CA   93403**

First Class Mail

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SLO-POKES

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ADVERTISING RATES

FULL PAGE:	$35.00
HALF PAGE:	$20.00
QUARTER PAGE:	$12.00
BUSINESS CARD:	$ 7.00

News items, short articles, original programs, product reviews, and other material of interest to the membership are eagerly solicited. Members are entitled to free classified ads. These may be submitted by mail to PO Box 4156, San Luis Obispo, CA 93403 or to the BBS (805) 481-9603 with extension .NWS Deadline is three days before the end of each month. AtariWriter files are preferred but anything legible and in English will usually get printed.

Parameters for AtariWriter files for Newsletter:

B12 D1 G2 I5 L0 R34 S2 T2 Y132
For STWriter, change R34 to R60.

SLO-POKES BBS (805) 481-9603

800 - XL - XE Meeting Notes
by George Crissman

It was a dark, starless night. The PG&E building was like a hawk roosting on the hillock near Marsh at Higuera. All around me, traffic was cruising past, unaware of the scheduled meeting to be held in the basement of the building before me. Adopting a casual air, I penetrated the defenses of the main entryway, knowing that it is usually less secure because of the appearance of security. Giving the secret password to the security officer, ("Good Evening, Sir." "Oh ... uh ... er ... GOOD Evening. Yes, indeed. A Very good evening. Yes, good. Indeed.") I breached the defenses and stole down the stairway. As I rounded the final corner, approaching the dark and shadowy meeting place, I heard "Yeow! Ghosts Everywhere! How's my health? I guess we start Atari Time again tonight. Rather than beat a strategic reverse advance, the new word for retreat, I looked around the corner and noticed it was Fearless President investigating a Word Processor for this evening's meeting.

C A L L   T O   O R D E R

There were 4 members present at 7:04 PM.
There were 7 members present at 7:07 PM.
There were 10 members present at 7:10 PM.
There were 12 members present at 7:12 PM.

It was decided to start the meeting at 7:12 so that we would not exceed the maximum capacity of the meeting room.

A N N O U N C E M E N T S

Tonight is a focus on word processors, printers will be considered next month due to the massive scope of the topic.

Howard Ferguson is the Interim Crusading Editor of the newsletter. He will take it "... for awhile ...." He now has the club printer and software, and is actively seeking articles for printing.

Question: Should the club supply mailing labels to the newsletter editor? Motion from the floor ("Yes, of course we should"), seconded, approved with no dissenting votes. It was noted in discussion that 60 copies go to members, 38 copies are sent out on an exchange basis. Besides, supplying the labels may hook the newsletter editor for awhile.

There will be a raffle tonight, a package of 1,000 address labels, and a factory-fresh copy of Gauntlet, a popular arcade game that has "only one, teeny, minor bug ... it locks up in two-player mode." It's compatible with the XE's, and a companion disc allows an extra 512 levels of play. "But the instructions are in German." noted Fearless, before he found out they were in French. "Gol-lee," he said. Items are courtesy of Computer Logic.

WORD PROCESSING

Unlike a food processor, a word processor does not dice, slice, chop, or puree the written word. Instead, it allows you to organize, rearrange, and easily edit the written word (a "document") for legibility and clarity in a manner impossible with a typewriter.

Question: Is there an advantage to having more than one word processor?

Answer: The best word processor ever made is the one you learn to use. Some Word Processors allow certain functions that others do not allow, but are all generally the same.

PUBLIC DOMAIN WORD PROCESSORS

The low cost of a public domain word processor is it's big draw, but is usually incomplete in functions offered. User documentation or extended features could be missing. Available word processors include:

a) Speedscript. The Atari version is entirely adequate. You can page, and control printer features. It's free, copy courtesy of you local user's group president. Displays 40 columns on the screen.

b) Antic Writer. This almost made it to commercial release. It's surprisingly capable and is authentically confusing with 2 (count 'em, two) documentation files. The file is so large, it had to be split into two: it wouldn't fit into memory otherwise. It also features cryptic help screens, and EQUATE statements to control the printer. You must spend time to learn Antic Writer in order to use it. Displays 40 columns on the screen.

c) Scriptor and Speedscript-80. They are here tonight, written in BASIC. They are a tad slow, and there is quite a waiting period before you start.

COMMERCIAL WORD PROCESSORS

a) Atari Word. Comes with 2-inch thick user manual, displays a full 80 columns from a 40 column window, and retails for the low, low price of $400.00. Sales of this product are, well, disappointing.

b) Atariwriter Cartridge. Has a print preview option, has a 40 column window over an 80 column document. This cartridge sold in droves, and was at one time recommended as a "best buy" by "a major consumer publication." A hardcopy function listing for Atariwriter was available for members to take home.

c) Atariwriter +. Evolutionary improvements, including a spelling checker for newsletter editors. Big problem is that printer drivers from Atariwriter were not compatible with Atariwriter +. There IS a disc around containing a printer driver construction set.

d) Paperclip by Batteries Included. Early versions shipped with a key that was to plugged into the joystick port. Was a very good package.

e) Bank Street Writer, ported from "another machine". Workable, usable.

f) The newest, most recent is from XLENT Software. Documentation is skimpy, the packaging is shoddy, but the software itself is a real gem (don't get excited, ST-er's), a sleeper of a good program. It allows you to incorporate graphics with text, such as pictures from the Koala Pad. It's not copy protected, and it's becoming the Fearless Choice due to it's graphics support.

and) Quickpix allows Print Shop (tm, Broderbund) graphics within an Atariwriter file. It works, it's quick, and looks good on the screen. It has drop-down menu's, and other goodies. Price is unknown. You need Print Shop to use Quickpix, but what Atari Owner doesn't have Print Shop? Oh, really? That many???
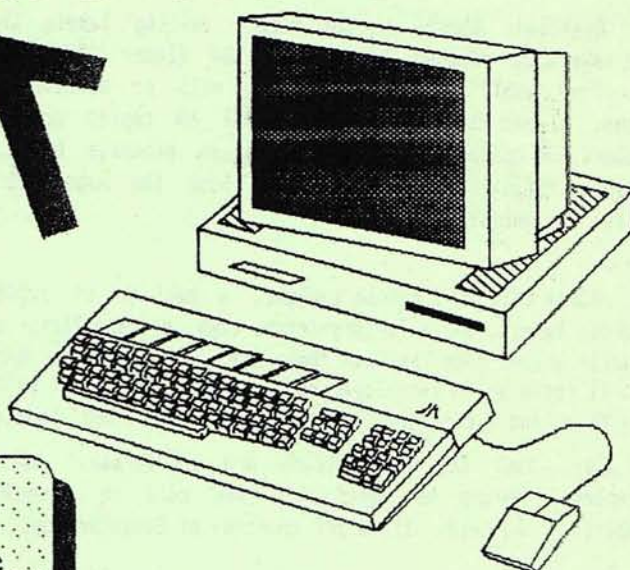
also) Typesetter: Reviewed during previous months.
Page Designer: Little brother to Typesetter.
Rubber Stamp: Allows you to build icons.

and-and) Homepak by Russ Wetmore. A three-for-one package that includes Hometerm (modem communications), Homefind (database program), and Hometext (word

processing). Hometext doesn't use standard Atari fonts: just plug in your own, and voila! You are limited in the size of your document, but it supported most home applications.

also-also) Using the 80-column Omniview Chip, you also have access to Atariwriter + 80 and Speedscript 80 (Omniview). They function identically to their 40-column predecessors, but display 80 columns instead of 40.

also-and) There are four word processors for the Atari ST. They are First Word (initially included with all ST's sold), Word Plus (an upgrade to First Word), STWriter (ported from the Atari 800 - XL - XE's, supports two-column printing), and Word Perfect (the complete word processor with spelling checker, footnoting, and other good stuff like that).

and-also) Rumors of Final Word and Microsoft Word for the ST could not be verified.

D E M O N S T R A T I O N

Script 80. Works with Axiom, Gorilla Banana, and even full-blown Epson printers. Initialization is slow, but program really flies when running under Turbo Basic (the disc of the month, some moons ago).

Question: Does Megafont work with Script 80? Yes, because it's not Word Processor sensitive. Megafond translates text to bit-mapped graphics, then prints the graphics image. It works best when you delete the control codes and set the printer to normal print. List the file to the disc (Atariwriter, save to disc). Works with either ASCII or ATASCII.

With a decent printer (Star NX-10, Epson anything, or whatever), you can support a download character set. You make up your own font style, store it to the RAM in you printer, and when you send the ASCII characters to the printer, it uses the font you sent it instead of it's own font when printing.

Megafont converts text files to a graphics format, then dumps it to the printer, bypassing the download character set entirely. Megafont should be used only after word processing is complete.

Question: Is Megafont slow? Absolutely right -- graphics mode is slow on any printer, but the overall effect is pleasing when printing is complete. The typeface should remain the same throughout the document.

Atariwriter + has a spelling checker and a dictionary.

Spellchecker is an aftermarket spelling checker that works with most text files.

Spell Magic is a public domain spelling checker that slow, but interactive in the way it works.

Question: Dictionary? Really?

Answer: Well, no. All it offers is spelling, not definitions or classification as to part of speech.

D E M O N S T R A T I O N

First XLENT word processor. Noted for it's colorful, blinking cursor. You print using either the joystick or the keyboard. "It seems wierd," noted Fearless, "but it's just an XLENT thing they do...."

It does printed reports in double columns if desired, has a mail merge capability, and prints to the screen using what looks like a print head in 80 columns.

Question: Why one or two passes on double-column print? In the two-pass mode, the word processor waits at the bottom of each printed page for you to roll up the per before it prints the second column.

First XLENT is for the 130 XE, but also works on the 48K machines. In the 130 XE, it offers additonal functions not available in the 800's or XL's, as well as longer documents. At only $29.95, less 10% User Group Discount, "this is a real sleeper of a program! I'm going to be using it more and more!" enthused Fearless.

Question: On the 130 XE, when you run out of memory, do you hit a key for more? Which key?

Answer: (Silence) I don't know.

B R E A K

The break was declared at 8:15, raffle tickets were available at the record-beating price of 4 for $1.00! This is a massive improvement over last month when they were only 3 for $1.00.

The break ended at 8:30.

S U M M I N G   U P

In conclusion, there is no advice, no suggestions regarding any of the available word processors. Just remember to read the documentation.

Your Editor Speaks

Another month goes by and as I see the months pass I often wonder about the future of Atari and of the Atari support for the computer that I bought with their name on it a few years ago. I used to own (in fact I still do) a TI/99 computer and soon after I bought it the Texas Instruments company decided not to make the TI-99 any more. Although they promised to continue to support the TI-99, the support was that of maintaining what we already had, and not in new software to make our TI-99 more useful and fun. This proved to be true for the third party software folks as well. Although some still support the TI, very few developed new software for the TI and a few that had just completed some great software and hardware items for the TI simply dropped the line altogether.

In contrast, Atari has definitely moved on to better computers and hardware, like the ST, but they have yet to forget the 8-bit folks. It seems that they are still interested in supporting the shrinking market of 8-bit users and they are even creating new 8-bit machines at a low cost for those who cannot afford, or do not need the high power of the ST or IBM type machines. They are providing new hardware to expand the abilities of the 8-bit computers and they are supporting third party software developers to this extent rather than ignoring these developers like the TI people tried to do.

ICD should be mentioned here as well because these people have spent a lot to money and time producing high quality software and hardware supporting the Atari 8-bit line. Such things as the SpartaDOS and MIO boards have helped to make these low budget computers expandable into a very powerful machine. Despite their shower speed, they can do most any job which these simple and low cost additions.

But I am afraid that the buck doesn't stop here. I must mention the support of the local computer supply stores. I bought my computer from them a few years ago and they have always been interested in servicing my continuing needs for support, repair and new innovations. Lets face it, with a limited market, they face some risk in providing software and hardware for us. Every piece of software that they buy to put up on the shelf is a risk to them because they are trusting us to buy it if and when we need it. With out their trust, we would be at the mercy of mail order. If you are like me, see the item in my hot little hand once I lay out the cash, is worth the few extra bucks it may cost. Plus, they can answer my questions about it before I buy it, rather that face disappointment over something that I buy through the mail, which might not live up to my expectation.

In conclusion, let me offer three cheers for those who trust us enough to continue to support a computer that is not the 'State of the art'. I think that we can trust them to provide this high level of support for the ST even when (not if) it also becomes slower or less capable than the new computers.

Howard Ferguson.

(From Z-Magazine Issue 78)
Garbage-On-The-Line
by Calamity Jane

Diary of a Mad SysOp

I don't know what qualifies one as a SysOp?? I wonder if all SysOp's are unhinged, obsessed, or just a wild, deranged, raging, lunatic? Why does one spend a whole heck of a lot of ones personal time and money on this leisure-time activity?? Not only time and money, but the speculation, reflection, brainstorming, anxiety, conviction, and determination!! Something... maybe it's in the air, or at least on the phone lines !!

As The Prairie Chip goes for an online time of three years, it has been thru a lot of changes and growth.

Fast.Amis, Tod.Amis, OASIS and now FoReM. Onward pward, so they say. Some of the callers have been with me since the beginning, others come and go. Every SysOp appreciates, you, the caller. Some of you I appreciate more than others. The use of handles vs. real life names is usually up to the SysOp. I like handles, lets have some fun!! The Chip gets the usual handles (several Joe Cool's in various stages of spelling) but some of them.... I have

to ask, as to what the heck IT is, where the heck did you come up with IT, and whether or not IT is dangerous. Some very clever handles, and I always wonder how alike you are with your handle? After all, IT is an extension of your personality. Virgin Killer??? hmmm...

Nothing exasperates me more than when the ever present YELL is activated and before I can physically move to the computer the caller has logged off. Hmmm, I get tired of "let's get the SysOp to jump" game. I recognize these callers and make a mental note. SysOp's do not sit at command headquarters waiting to answer your chat. Some SysOp's (sIs-op's (long I) in England) do not chat. I chat. I have found it another way to get to know people and I like it. I am more than happy to help. Be it looking up that forgotten password, helping the new caller with logging on (without adding 5 names to the hard disk), making your way around the system or comparing the MPH of the wind or the depth of the latest snow. Yes, my BBS is a friend, and very much a companion. I care about several of you very much, you are good company!!

When all goes well, running a BBS is fun, challenging, satisfying, captivating, amusing and exciting. When all goes bad, a SysOp's job is boring, frustrating, tiresome, tedious and annoying. (FoReM has improved on this situation tremendously) One can go from a star to a bum in one afternoon. Nothing much (besides equipment failure) is
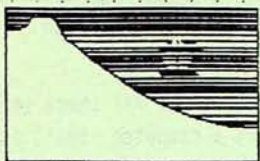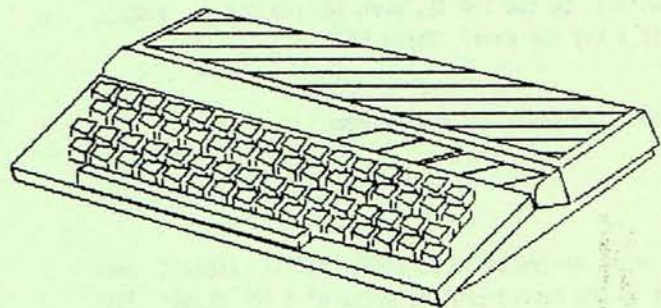
worse than a hard disk crash or heaven forbid, the message bases crashing. Remember, the first rule is there are no rules, but a good one could be: Make A Back-Up!! What I am getting at here, is if you encounter a problem using a system, be patient. And be kind !! Leave a message to the SysOp with as much information as possible. What the error was, what you were attempting to do, anything helps really.

I know a certain things mean certain things!! I do the dumb and stupid, I just try not to let you catch me at it !!

One of my biggest peeves, is, those who are done on the system and just drop carrier. ARGGHH !! This irritates me more than a dumb message that makes no sense!! Please log-off properly. A system remembers you!! What does it say about you as a caller, when your stats show 47 downloads to 0 up loads??? You could be treading on shaky phone lines here!! Remember, there is more to most BBS's than the [F] and [Y] commands!! Don't be a computer wimp.

This can be thankless job. But I guess I don't do it for that reason. I'll tell you who has the truly thankless job. The Co-SysOp's of the world. I try to show my appreciation as much as I can, but it just never seems enough. So, to the Co-SysOp's of the BBS world, this is a thank-you from everyone who doesn't realize what it is YOU do!!

Tele-computing is a facinating way to communicate and in theory, quite simple.

The ability to get two machines to interact, whether they are across the room =or across the world. I am always interested in whose been on the BBS, always glad to see someone who has been away, and always glad to meet someone new. On top of the desk a picture of my Great-Grandfather, taken in 1913, sitting at one of the first telephone switchboards in the Rocky Mountain area. He operated this switchboard out of his home just West of Denver, and probably felt the same way as I do operating my electronic gadgets. I feel a deep kin-ship with him and try to offer the same satisfying service the look on his face projects. Till then...be chatting at ya' !!   -=-CJ-=-

Permission Granted to Reprint...with proper credit

(From Z-Magazine Issue 71)
ATARI NEWS UPDATE
From GEnie ST RT

The Atari SX212 modem is currently shipping to Atari dealers in the USA. The first shipment arrived at the Sunnyvale warehouse during this past week.

The SX212 is a Hayes-compatible modem which operates at 1200 baud (and also at 0-300 baud). Its Hayes-compatibility extends to the S-registers.

The SX212 modem includes both the standard RS232 port and the Atari 8-bit SIO port. However, 8-bit users should be aware that the software to support this modem through the SIO is not yet released -- in the meantime, the modem can still be used through an 850 or equivalent interface.

The modem package includes a power supply (identical to the 2600's), a detailed manual, and special offers from the GEnie (General Electric) and BIX (Byte Magazine) online services.

To connect the SX212 to an ST or to any other RS232-equipped computer, a full RS232 cable is needed -- a 3-wire cable does not work with smart modems.

When the software is ready, Atari will market an add-on package for 8-bit users. This will contain an SIO cable and a disk which includes the modem driver and the SX Express terminal program by Keith Ledbetter.

The suggested list price of the SX212 modem is $99.95.

(From Z-Magazine Issue 72)
ATARI NEWS UPDATE
..From GEnie Services Atari RT..

The XEP80 80-column adapters are in the Atari warehouse in Sunnyvale and are available for immediate shipment to dealers.

The XEP80 plugs into the 2nd joystick port of any Atari 8-bit computer. Any video monitor can plug into the XEP80 and deliver true 80-column text. An extra port on the XEP80 allows standard parallel printers (ST or IBM compatible) to plug directly into the 8-bit Atari computers.

The driver program for the XEP80 lets it take the place of the E: device. Software that is compatible with the E: device (such as Atari BASIC) will work in 80 columns without modification. Other software that writes directly to the screen (bypassing the OS) would need modification before working in 80 columns.

Atari is working on AtariWriter 80 and Silent Butler 80 to support the XEP80. Delivery dates on these products are not yet set.

The XEP80 retails for $79.95.

The new XE Game System has also arrived in Sunnyvale and is on its way to toy stores and other retailers in the USA.

The XE Game System retails for $149.95. It comes with a sophisticated keyboard, a light gun, and three top games including Flight Simulator II, Missile Command, and Bug Hunt.

(From Z-Magazine Issue 73)
ZMAG TECHNIQUE
...The Sound of Digital Merriment...
by Mr. Goodprobe

Most connoisseurs of fine food will share with you the fact that there is no finer compliment to a great meal than a fine wine. This holds true in the computer world also, there is no finer compliment to a good program than some super sound! This week's hardware hints will aid you in your quest of true "music to your ears"!

Although the sound is naturally limited which your Atari 8 bit computer can produce, some of this deficiency in the quality of the sound produced is due to lack of effort on the part of many programmers. A few recent releases for the Atari 8 bit computer that I have had the privilege of seeing seem to be on the road to correct this though. We can take a long step toward enhancing the sound by some clever hardware hacking.

If you are presently using a portable TV with your Atari system, the easy way to access the audio would be the monitor jack. You can purchase a monitor cable, any with your style monitor plug and 2 leads or more with RCA style plugs on them will suffice, at your local TV shop, Video store, or the like. Simply plug the cable into the back of your computer, and pop the other end into the tape or auxiliary jack of your home stereo. Don't worry about putting it in wrong, as it can not hurt anything. If you hear a loud buzz when you turn on the stereo you know you plugged in the wrong jack, merely choose another and insert it. If you wish 2 channels to produce this computer generated audio, you can purchase a stereo synthesizer for about 5-10 dollars. This will not produce true stereo, but will give you 2 separate audio channels. Plug the monitor/audio lead into the adapter, and then plug the output leads from the adapter into the tape or auxiliary inputs of your stereo.

If you are using a monitor with your Atari computer system, your task is a bit harder, but the results will be just as good. I would advise you to obtain a lead that has an RCA style jack on one end, and stripped, bare wires on the other. After testing the quality of the sound produced, you may wish to drill a small hole in the back end of your computer and insert the bare end of the 2 conductor wire through this hole. After you opened your computer and safely stowed the screws and cover, look for the following part in your Atari:

Model #	Part #	Location of part
800	R194	On motherboard, on right hand side, next to 4.7k small standing electro marked C179.
800xl	R7 or	Just below 8 pin IC, IC is left-center of board
	R8*	At left-hand side of same IC R7=2k R8=5.1k
1200x1	L1	At top right of cartridge port, is the middle of the 3 jumpers w/ black ferrite beads on them
65xe	R7 or	Located just below 8 pin IC, and at right side of
	R8*	IC, IC is directly below RF modulator7=2k R8=5.1k
130xe	R7 or	Located just below 8 pin IC, and at right side of
	R8*	IC, IC is directly below RF modulator R7=2k R8=5.1k

*= Try connecting to either of these 2 resistors, it will sound better on one or the other of them, depending on your stereo and the amount of amplification it provides. Connect wear it sounds best to you!

Ok, there you have it! Now, although you will not receive concert hall audio, the difference will be quite noticeable! One game I would recommend you trying so you can see what "this baby can do" would be the fine Karate game called World Championship Karate by Epyx.

One further audio note: the owners of Commodore 1702 monitors can use the audio jack mounted on the front of their monitor for an interesting purpose. We all well know that when one is using their favorite word processor or have logged on to their favorite bulletin board...there is no sound! To change this, simply run a line from the tape outputs of your stereo to the audio input jack of your monitor. You simply haven't lived until you listened to "Flight of the Bumblebee" while using Paperclip to write your long-lost Aunt Gertie!

-Mr. Goodprobe-
 (on lend from)
 Midtown TV
 (216)633-8997
 Atari 8/16 Repair/Sales

(From Z-Magazine Issue 73)
FCC UPDATE
by M. G. Brown

Looming on the horizon is the specter of the Federal Communications Commission's "Amendments of Part 69 of the Commission's Rules Relating to Enhanced Service Providers".

If the amendments are adopted as proposed, local telephone companies will be allowed to charge enhanced service providers (such as Tymnet and Telenet, to name a few) by the minute. The added costs will be passed on to users of these services.

While the FCC claims these amendments are part of a long-range policy "toward a more economically rational pricing scheme", their good intent in dropping the exemption becomes suspicious when applied to those who are using these services for data communications.

Since the exemptions were first allowed in 1983, a number of data communications specific businesses have sprung up in competition with traditional providers, to serve the access needs of computer users. This growth has followed the upward trend in use of computer data communications by business as well as the general public.

Low cost communications services such as the innovative and popular PC Pursuit, begun in 1985 by GTE Telenet, are helping make new ideas in telecommunications ssible. At night and during weekends, PC Pursuit allows users in some 500 cities to make the long-distance link to 25 major metropolitan areas for a flat fee of $25 a month.

PC Pursuit and services like it have created more affordable information exchange medium "for the rest of us". Suddenly, bulletin board systems and smaller information systems became centers for national exchange of information and ideas. Specialized systems have sprung up to satisfy the needs of researchers in such diverse areas as genealogy and health care, and shareware producers suddenly find themselves with a much wider market. Even the more traditional software and hardware producers are setting up their own BBS systems as a way to provide technical support.

According to a recent statement by Telenet, if the proposal is adopted "PC Pursuit's current 'flat-rate/ unlimited usage' service would have to be repriced to a per-usage basis, including an estimated $7 to $9 per-hour access charge. It is doubtful that the service would survive at this inflated rate". The demise of PC Pursuit would be followed by the destruction of innovative work on and for microcomputers and telecommunications.

Individuals, small businesses, non-profit organizations and libraries are likely to be hit the hardest and most directly by the proposals. Many libraries around the country now offer their patrons electronic database searches. With the added costs, such services in rural and small libraries are unlikely to continue because of the increased costs. Even patrons who never request an on-line search will suffer. Interlibrary loan and book cataloging are increasingly dependent upon reasonably priced interstate telecommunications.

One of the FCC's goals is the "elimination of unreasonable discrimination and undue preferences among rates for interstate services". Yet discriminations should be made, especially when you consider that phone companies provide all sorts of special arrangements for toll carriers, including switching machines costing millions of dollars and special trunking exclusively for toll carriers. Packet-switched networks such as Telenet, however, receive no special treatment. They connect into the local network in the same manner you and I do- through ordinary lines.
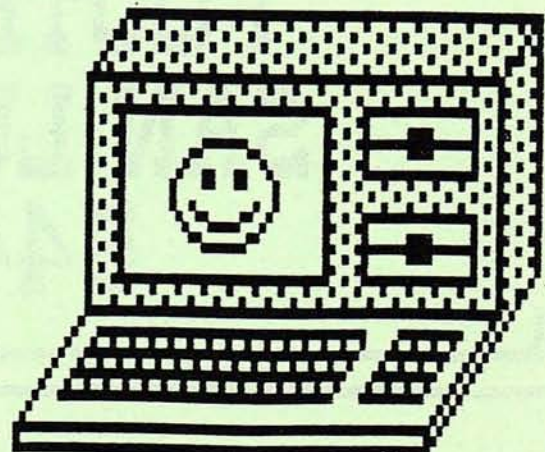
Some argue that packet-switched networks make heavier use of those ordinary lines. Heavier use is already priced into business rates, however, about five times residential rates. The largest expense, having the line installed to begin with, is not dependent on the amount of use.

The FCC has not awakened to the fact that data transmission is now being used as a secondary means of communications by more and more "common" Americans. This personal communication and information revolution is in full swing and should only be expected to grow in the foreseeable future. This growth path will be stunted if this proposal is adopted.

By all estimations, more people and businesses will suffer that will gain if the FCC's proposal is adopted. It seems that eliminating the exemption will not only affect the progress of telecommunications in this country, but will slow the progress of other developing technologies depending on the free flow of information as well.
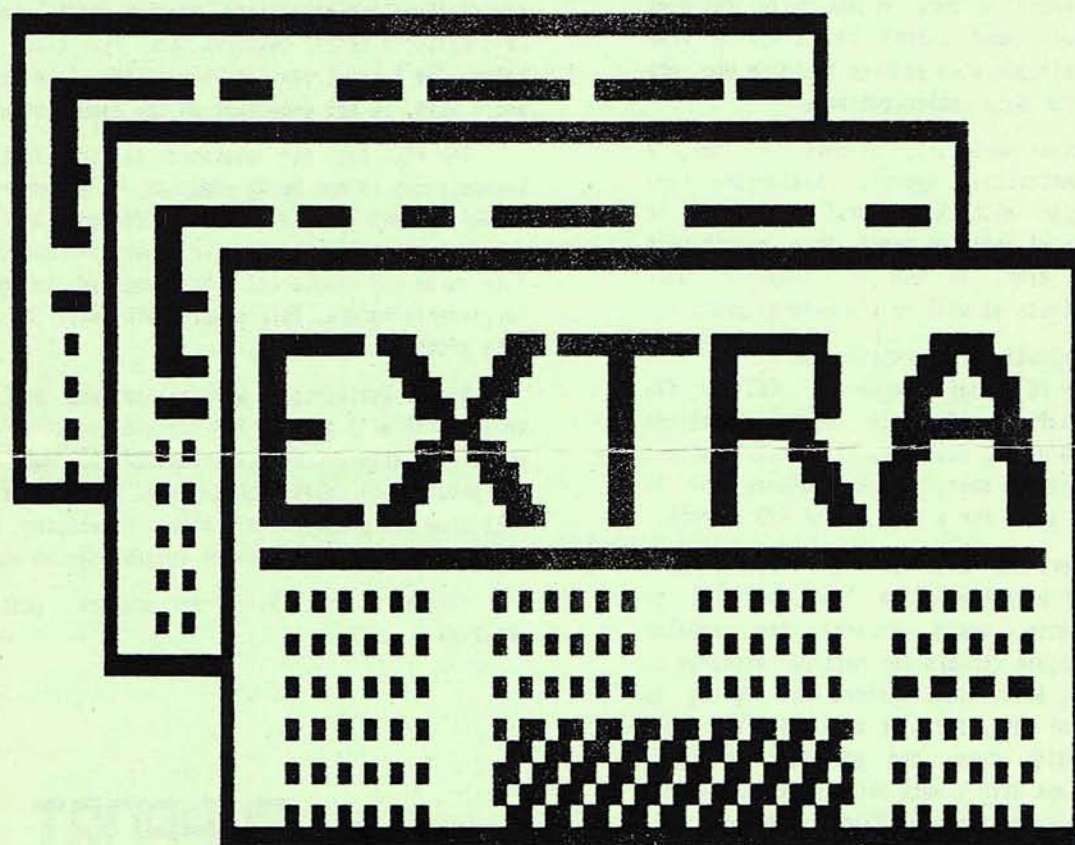
(Thanks to Bruce Miller for sources quoted in this article)